

## National-Russian Bilingualism and its Use in Teaching Russian to Non-Native Speakers

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**Abstract:** The topic of National-Russian bilingualism and its use in teaching Russian to non-native speakers is highly relevant in the contemporary globalized world. Bilingualism, which represents the mastery of two languages at different levels, includes both childhood and adult forms of language acquisition. In the context of teaching Russian to non-native speakers, particular attention is paid to the use of bilingualism as an effective tool for deeper and faster mastery of linguistic skills. The study examines the role of bilingualism in enhancing both speech and cognitive competence, as well as in the process of integration into Russian-speaking communities. Employing a bilingual approach contributes to the development of intercultural communication and creates conditions for successful social and educational interaction of non-native students in Russian-speaking environments.

**Keywords:** Bilingualism, Types of Bilingualism, Reproductive Bilingualism, Productive Bilingualism, Artificial Bilingualism, Combinatorial Type of Bilingualism, Specifics of Teaching in a Multicultural Environment



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The term “bilingualism” (from Latin bi – two, lingua – language) denotes the ability to speak two languages. Bilingualism has two primary meanings:

1. The ability of an individual or group to use two languages alternately.
2. The actual practice of alternating the use of two languages; that is, engaging in communication in both languages.

There exists both a narrow and a broad understanding of bilingualism. In the narrow sense, it refers to a more or less fluent command of two languages – native and non-native. In the broad sense, it denotes relative proficiency in a second language and the ability to use it in specific spheres of communication. From this perspective, the minimum level of mastery of a second language can be considered the level sufficient for an individual to perform speech acts in which the functions of the second language are realized. If proficiency falls below this level, there are insufficient grounds to consider such command as evidence of bilingualism. The classical definition, according to U. Weinreich, states that bilingualism is the mastery of two languages and their alternating use depending on the conditions of verbal communication [Weinreich, 1972, p.18]. From a psycholinguistic perspective, bilingualism is the ability to employ two language systems for communication.

Bilingualism as a scientific problem began to form in the late 19th century, although its roots go much further back — to antiquity, when the languages of conquerors and the conquered intermingled in subjugated territories. Social challenges became the primary stimulus for the emergence of didactic interest in this phenomenon. With the development of linguistic theories at the end of the 19th century, bilingualism became a subject of study within linguistics. This issue arises from the theory of language interaction, as bilingualism has traditionally been understood as the ability to command and alternate between two languages.

Bilingualism has always been and remains an important phenomenon for the coexistence of diverse ethnic groups and cultures, yet it also carries inherent contradictions and provokes a range of reactions — from anxious warnings to fierce resistance and prejudice. On the one hand, it calls into question the possibility of a monolingual culture and raises concerns about its preservation; on the other hand, it broadens cultural horizons, providing access to the experiences of other linguistic and cultural communities, thus facilitating the assimilation of universal human values. In the modern world, which strives for "global humanism" and the creation of a society with diverse national models, the role of bilingualism in shaping social heterogeneity and its significance as a positive element in intercultural interaction cannot be overlooked.

According to various researchers, there are more bilinguals in the world than monolinguals. It is known that approximately 70% of the global population possess some degree of proficiency in two or more languages. Bilingualism is considered to have positive effects on memory development, the ability to understand, analyze, and discuss linguistic phenomena, mental agility, reaction speed, mathematical skills, and logic. Fully developed bilinguals tend to excel academically and more easily acquire abstract sciences, literature, and additional foreign languages.

Children who are bilingual require language nurturing within the family. If insufficient attention is given — for example, if the child communicates at home only in the native language, while outside hearing only Russian — the separation of linguistic domains occurs. Therefore, a well-structured methodology for teaching languages to bilingual children is necessary.

It is generally considered impossible to achieve an absolutely equal level of proficiency in both languages. Absolute bilingualism implies identical mastery of both languages in all communicative situations, which is practically unattainable. This is explained by the fact that the experience a person gains using one language will always differ from the experience gained through using another language. The level of proficiency in each language, as well as their usage in various spheres of communication, depends on numerous social, economic, political, and cultural factors within the speaking community. During the interaction of two languages in the context of bilingualism, one language may completely displace the other, or both languages may undergo changes at different levels of language structure: phonetic (pronunciation changes) and grammatical (borrowings and calques).

If a child acquires a second language at school age, this is referred to as successive (sequential) bilingualism. Language acquisition in this case occurs differently. The child constantly compares the two languages; sounds are perceived "by contrast" with the first language. The same applies to grammatical aspects of the language.

Features of speech development in bilingual children include:

1. Later acquisition of speech;
2. Smaller vocabulary in each language, although the total vocabulary of the bilingual child is larger;
3. Insufficient mastery of the grammar of the non-native language;
4. Difficulties in acquiring written skills in the second language;
5. Gradual loss of the non-dominant language in the absence of practice.

Bilingualism can be classified as follows:

- **Subordinative** (the individual is more proficient in one language than the other) — **Coordinative** (proficiency in both languages is approximately equal);

- **Active** (the individual regularly uses both languages) — **Passive** (more frequent use of one language);
- **Contact** (maintains communication with native speakers) — **Non-contact** (absence of such communication);
- **Autonomous** — **Parallel** (in autonomous bilingualism, the languages are acquired independently, while in parallel acquisition, mastery of one language occurs based on the other).

Active bilingualism can be further divided into “pure bilingualism” and “mixed bilingualism.” Based on types of speech activity, several types of subordinative bilingualism are identified: **receptive, reproductive, and productive**. Receptive bilingualism allows an individual to understand written or spoken material in a non-native language and convey its content in the native language. Reproductive bilingualism involves the ability to reproduce the speech of others in the language in which it was perceived. Productive bilingualism is the ability to express one’s own thoughts in different languages. When communication occurs at home in the native language and outside in the second language, this constitutes natural bilingualism.

Artificial bilingualism is acquired through the study of a second language after the native language. In mixed bilingualism, a unified conceptual system is formed for both languages. In most cases, learning a second language leads to subordinative bilingualism, where words of the second language are linked not to the conceptual system but to words of the native language. Subordinative bilingualism is characteristic of limited language proficiency, while coordinative indicates a higher level.

The **combinatorial type** of bilingualism involves the ability to consciously compare forms of expression in two languages and select the optimal translation. This type of bilingualism is considered the foundation of translation competence, which, in addition to a certain level of proficiency in two languages, includes specific translation skills and abilities.

In contemporary psycholinguistics, three main types of bilingualism are usually distinguished [Weinreich, 1999, p.10]: coordinative, subordinative, and mixed. A language personality generally balances among these three types depending on the linguistic environment. The ideal is coordinative bilingualism, where the learner freely switches between semantic bases — speaking both languages fluently. However, a third semantic base may overlay the first two (depending on previously studied languages, such as English). Determining the degree of dominance and interaction of different semantic bases is crucial for developing a coordinated strategy for teaching three languages. The absence of such a strategy negatively affects not only speech activity but also cognitive, aesthetic, and moral development.

The relationship between speech activity and overall mental development has always attracted the attention of educators, as it helps address the broader methodological problem of the interrelation between thought and speech. In this context, **integrative technologies** for learning languages — linking coordinative and subordinative bilingualism — are of particular importance. These methods contribute to the formation of a fully developed language personality, capable of functioning adequately in different spheres (work, everyday life, etc.). To develop good coordination (fluent communication in two or three languages) or subordination (fluency in one language and translation-based communication in another), integration of language disciplines is necessary, considering phenomena of **transposition** (positive transfer of similar linguistic elements) and **interference** (negative influence of diverging linguistic elements).

In multilingual communication, bilingualism often naturally emerges. This is both a social necessity and a condition because different peoples have different languages. Each community possesses unique cultures and traditions, which are reflected in its languages.

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